DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 175 UD 032 235

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TITLE	Safe Schools Report of the Anti-Violence Documentation Project from the Safe Schools Coalition of Washington. Will You Be There for Every Child? Fourth Annual Report.
INSTITUTION	Safe Schools Coalition of Washington, Seattle.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	36p.; For the accompanying resource guide, see UD 032 236.
AVAILABLE FROM	Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, P.O. Box 16776, Seattle, WA 98116; e-mail: NCAMH@aol.com; World Wide Web: http://members.tripod.com/~claytoly/ssp home
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	American Indians; Elementary Secondary Education; *Homophobia; *Homosexuality; *Incidence; *Partnerships in Education; Responses; *School Safety; Sexual Harassment; Surveys; *Violence
IDENTIFIERS	*Washington

ABSTRACT

The Safe Schools Coalition of Washington is a public-private partnership of 90 offices, agencies, and organizations, as well as many individuals. The Coalition's Anti-Violence Documentation Project is an ongoing statewide qualitative study examining the phenomenon of anti-gay sexual harassment and violence in kindergarten through grade 12. In the first 4 years of this 5-year study, over 90 incidents have been reported to the Project. They have come from at least 59 public schools, including 1 reservation school, and 1 private school, in 30 school districts and 9 counties. They have included 8 gang rapes and 19 physical assaults. There have been 14 incidents of physical harassment or sexual assault short of rape and 34 incidents of ongoing verbal and other harassment. Of the total reported incidents, 41 were considered serious enough to warrant possible criminal allegations. In half the reported incidents, where there were adult witnesses, the adults stood by in silence. These reports are undoubtedly a small subset of all antigay harassment in Washington State, but they provide a portrait of the range of anti-gay bullying activities and the response of adults. Part 2 of the report reviews some quantitative studies of actual prevalence of harassment of gay and lesbian students. One of these studies, the Seattle Teen Health Risk Survey, was actually conducted in Washington in 1995. (Contains one table and four figures.) (SLD)

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ED 418 175

The Fourth Annual Safe Schools Report

of the
Anti-Violence
Documentation Project
from the
Safe Schools Coalition
of Washington

Fall 1997

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The Ninety Offices, Agencies And Organizations Which Belong To The Safe Schools Coalition of Washington

- American Friends Service Committee
- Association For Sexuality Education and Training (ASSET)
- Bainbridge Island School District's Multicultural Advisory Council
- Benton/Franklin Council for Children and Youth
- Center for Human Services
- Central Washington Comprehensive Mental Health
- Central Washington University Women's Resource Center
- Community Youth Services
- Empowerment Safety Respect America
- Equality Washington (formerly Hands Off Washington), Central Office and its twenty-six local coalitions: Bainbridge, Clallam County, East King County, Grant County, Grays Harbor, Island County, Jefferson County, Kititas County, Kitsap County, Lewis County, Long Beach, Longview, Pierce County, Skagit County, Snohomish County, South King County, Southwest Washington, Spokane County, Stevens County, Thurston County, Tri-Cities, Walla Walla, Wenatchee, Whatcom County, Whitman County, Yakima
- Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) of Washington
- Issaquah High School Student Body Association
- King County Sexual Assault Resource Center
- Lake Washington Education Association
- Lambert House
- Lavender Families Resource Network
- League of Women Voters of Washington
- Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment
- Parents, Family & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG), Pacific Northwest Regional Office and its nineteen local chapters: Aberdeen/Harbor Area, Bainbridge Island, Bellevue, Bellingham/NW Washington, Bremerton/Kitsap County, Burien/South King County, Clarkston-Lewiston/Quad Cities, Ellensburg, Everett/Snohomish, Grant County, Olympia, Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, TriCities, Vancouver/SW Washington, Wenatchee Valley, Whidbey Island, Yakima/Yakima Valley
- Planned Parenthood of Central Washington
- Planned Parenthood of Western Washington
- Ravenna United Methodist Church
- Region V AIDSNet
- School Nurse Organization of Washington
- Seattle City Office for Civil Rights
- Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities
- Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities
- Seattle Education Association
- Seattle-King County Department of Public Health
- Seattle Public Schools' Inter-High (Student) Council
- Seattle Public Schools' Office of Comprehensive Health Education
- Seattle Public Schools' Office of Drug/Alcohol Intervention
- Sexuality Educational Services (Olympia)
- Snohomish Health District's GLOBE Youth Program
- Snohomish County Human Services Department
- Stonewall Recovery Services
- Tacoma-Pierce County Department of Public Health
- The Eastside Network (TEN)
- University of Washington School of Medicine, Adolescent Medicine Program
- Washington Education Association
- Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Yakima Education Association
- Yakima Youth Commission
- Youth Eastside Services (YES)
- Youthcare

The Safe Schools Coalition is a public-private partnership of 90 agencies and many individuals. Its mission is to help make Washington State schools safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

Permission is granted to photocopy this report.
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Grant, Award and In-kind Funding for the Safe Schools Project has been provided by:

- Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities
- Seattle-King County Department of Public Health
- Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment
- Pride Foundation
- Washington Education Association
- American Friends Service Committee
- The City of Seattle
- Providence Medical Center
- Trade Printery
- The King County Commission for Children, Youth and Families

The Research Team and the Coalition also want to express appreciation to:

- Pamela Hillard and the Seattle Public Schools for offering the Coalition access to the Teen Health Risk Survey data
- Minnie Orr for her assistance coordinating the printing of the poster.

We are indebted to the work of:

- Jorge Espinosa and the Education Committee of the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, creators of the "Anti-Bias Education Resource Guide"
- The GLSEN-Detroit Research Team, creators of "Bruised Bodies, Bruised Spirits: An Assessment of the Current Climate of Safety for GLB Youth in Southeastern Michigan Schools"
- Linda Gasparovic and Ravenna United Methodist Church, creators of the Website, *"Washington State Open and Affirming Congregations"*

The Public Service Announcements were produced with generous support from:

Eastman Kodak
Alpha Cine Laboratories
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8 Reasons Why the Safe Schools Coalition Is Providing this Report and Resource Guide to Schools

1. Because every child is ***entitled*** to equal opportunity to learn, in an emotionally and physically safe place.

2. Because children come from diverse kinds of families and have diverse orientations and identities ... and public schools are supposed to serve them all.

3. Because learning can only take place when the teacher and the student feel respected and secure.

4. Because anti-gay harassment and violence make schools unsafe for ***everybody***, gay and straight.

5. Because many incidents never come to the attention of the school and it's time we understood what students (faculty, parents) experience.

6. Because schools cannot address what they do not know is happening.

7. Because once we know that harassment is happening, we can educate. Only education can prevent harassment; rules are not enough.

8. Because we cannot educate without tools. We need tools with which to prevent harassment, respond to it, recover from it ... and allies in the larger community to support our efforts. We ***are*** a village. We ***can*** be there for every child. Together.

Contents

Executive Summary 1

PART ONE: The Safe Schools Anti-Violence Documentation Project

Introduction 3
Purpose of the Safe Schools Project 3
Methodology of the Safe Schools Project 3
Incident Categories and Narratives 5
Findings of the Safe Schools Project, 1994-1997 14
A Caution About Interpreting the Findings of the Safe Schools Project 22

PART TWO: Quantitative Studies of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth and Schools

The Demographics of Sexual Orientation and Experience 23
The Prevalence of Anti-Gay Harassment and Violence 25
Coming-of-Age and the Frequency of Self-Destructive Behavior 25

PART THREE: Recommendations 27

Will You Be There For Every Child?

The Fourth Annual Report of the
Safe Schools Anti-Violence Documentation Project

Executive Summary: Fall, 1997

The Safe Schools Coalition is a public-private partnership of ninety offices, agencies and organizations as well as many individuals. Its mission is to help make Washington State schools safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

The Coalition's Anti-Violence Documentation Project is an ongoing statewide qualitative study examining the phenomenon of anti-gay sexual harassment and violence in schools, kindergarten through grade twelve. In the first four years of this five year study, ninety-one incidents have been reported to the Project. The Fourth Annual Report, summarized here, describes those incidents.

- ***Ninety-one* incidents of anti-gay harassment and violence have been reported to the Project to date.** They have come from:
  - ✓ At least **59** public schools, including a reservation school, and one private school.[1]
  - ✓ **30** public school districts (urban, suburban, small town and rural).
  - ✓ **9** counties.
- They have included:
  - **Gang Rapes.** (8 to date; 1 reported in the 1996/97 school year) All of the eight rapes reported to the Project to date have involved multiple assailants. In three cases, besides raping the person, the attackers also urinated on him or her. In two cases, they ejaculated on the targeted individuals. In one, they vomited on the person. In one case they broke a teen's hand. For the first time, this year, a reported rape involved an adult.
  - **Physical assaults.** (19 to date; 4 reported in 1996/97) Eleven of the assaults were serious beatings in which a total of twelve people were kicked, punched, and/or injured with weapons. They resulted in cuts, contusions, and broken bones. One of those reported this year led to the convictions of five assailants.
  - **Physical harassment and/or sexual assault, short of rape.** (14 incidents to date; 2 reported in 1996/97). In some of these incidents, students were pushed or pulled or brushed up against. In others, they were spit at or something was thrown at them. In some cases, students' clothes were pulled up or down or off. One of the two reported this year led to a teen attempting suicide and requiring mental health hospitalization.
  - **On-going verbal and other harassment.** (34 incidents to date; 4 reported in 1996/97). These involved, for example, repeated public humiliation, vandalism of someone's property, spreading rumors about their sexual orientation, death threats, etc. In one case, a friend of the targeted student was upset at what she saw as minimal discipline of the offender. This friend responded by printing a "newsletter" in which she urged her peers not to harass Gay classmates. She also charged the school with failing to protect its Gay students. This friend received more serious discipline for the newsletter than the offender had for the assault.
  - **One-time, climate setting incidents.** (16 to date; 3 reported in 1996/97) These entailed things such as name-calling, offensive jokes, etc. In one incident reported this year, no single individual was intentionally targeted. A teacher expressed the opinion, in class, that "Lesbians and Gays are sinners" and "people who have AIDS deserve to burn in Hell." At least one student, whose father is Gay and has AIDS, was very upset about the teacher's comments. A classmate consoled her afterwards.
- Incidents serious enough to warrant possible criminal allegations: ***forty-one***.
- Targeted individuals who, to our knowledge, actually reported the offense to the police: ***six***.
- Ratio of offenders to the people they targeted: ***three against one***.
- Proportion of incidents with adult witnesses, where adults stood by in silence: ***half***.
- Number of youth who report having changed schools (in some cases, multiple times) to try to escape the abuse: ***six***.
- Number of youth who reported dropping out as a result of the harassment: ***nine***.
- Number of reported suicide attempts: ***eight***.
- Number of suicides: ***one***.

[1] *And possibly more; some callers (11 of 95) have declined to name their school. Two of these also declined to identify the school district.*

PART ONE:

The Safe Schools Anti-Violence Documentation Project

Introduction

The Safe Schools Project is a five-year, statewide study examining the phenomenon of anti-gay[2] harassment and violence in schools K through 12. In its first four years, the Project has conducted in-depth interviews with a total of 95 people, regarding 91 separate anti-gay incidents.[3] These incidents were reported by targets, witnesses, one individual who was both a target *and* an offender, and other individuals who learned of an incident after the fact, such as school employees and the parents of targeted students.

Purpose of the Safe Schools Project

The Safe Schools Project is qualitative research, designed to help educators, parents and policy-makers understand the phenomenon of anti-gay harassment and violence in schools. It can help guide program planning efforts to make schools safer for every child, parent and educator. The process is designed to answer such questions as:

1) What sorts of harassing or violent behavior associated with sexual orientation occur in schools, in transit to or from schools, and at school sponsored events?
2) Are these incidents witnessed by students?
3) What are their reactions?
4) Are they witnessed by adults?
5) What are *their* reactions?
6) Who gets targeted?
7) What seems to make the offenders think that these people are Gay (when they do)?
8) Who are the offenders?
9) How do these incidents affect those who are targeted?
10) How do they affect those who witness the bullying?
11) Do targeted children and teens let their families know what happened?
12) How do they perceive that their families respond (when they know)?
13) Are these incidents brought to the attention of the principal?
14) How do *they* seem to respond (when they know)?
15) How do callers *wish* their building administrator would have responded (if he or she had known)?
16) What else do these students (and teachers and parents and others) want us to hear?

Methodology of the Safe Schools Project

For the most part, reports were made over the phone, through a statewide, toll-free number (1-800-5B-PROUD) on the initiative of the respondent.[4] Reports were solicited in a number of ways. During the 1996/97 school year, every middle and high school nurse, librarian, and counselor in Washington State received the Third Annual Report, including a poster. Some respondents have learned of the Project from these posters; from radio and print media coverage of the Project (which was sporadic); from the Internet; or from the Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual-Transgender-Questioning Youth Info Line (206-322-7900). Most callers, however, say they learned of the Project in a more direct person-to-person way. They say that a school employee, a family member, or a Coalition member agency encouraged them to report what happened.

The interviews were conducted by trained counselors from the crisis and information line of Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities, a state-licensed community mental health agency. In addition to their training as counselors, these interviewers received two hours of training specifically regarding administering the survey instrument.

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[2]This report uses the term "anti-gay" as shorthand to include incidents motivated by bias against Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender people.

[3]This figure excludes 23 reports which failed to meet one or more of the criteria for inclusion (see page 4, and the Category Descriptions starting on page 5, for what constitutes "an incident.") or in which the caller declined to give Safe Schools permission for including his or her story, even anonymously, in the annual report.

[4]All but thirteen were phone reports. The initial twelve and one this year were made face to face, at a focus group and several support groups (in private, not in the presence of other focus or support group members).

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The eighty item survey instrument takes over thirty minutes to complete. A number of people have expressed concern that so long and emotionally arduous an interview probably discourages many people from reporting. However, it is less crucial in this kind of descriptive research effort to gather large *numbers* of incident reports, than it is to have really complete and valid data. Thus, the full half-hour interviews have been preserved in 1996/97 for three reasons:

- because of the depth of information required,
- to discourage false reporting and screen for internal consistency, and
- because callers are asked periodically throughout the interview how they are doing and whether they are able to continue with the research protocol. (A caller's need for counseling is always given precedence over completing the interview. At the end of the interview, callers are also asked if they would like to be referred for — or contacted about — on-going counseling and/or advocacy.)

To qualify for inclusion in the Safe Schools Project, an "incident" had to meet a number of criteria:

1. There had to be sufficient objective facts to lead to the reasonable conclusion that the offenders' actions were based in whole or in part on their bias against Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Transgender (GLBT) people.[5] The offenders may have:
   a. said something to indicate that they believed the person was Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender before or during the incident, ***or***
   b. used defamatory language or gestures regarding GLBT people during the incident, ***or***
   c. defaced something that bore a symbol of support for GLBT civil rights (such as a pink triangle or a Safe Staff List), ***and***
2. The incident must have occurred since 1990, ***and***
3. The entire incident or part of the pattern of incidents must have occurred:
   a. on public or private school property (K-12) in Washington State, ***or***
   b. on the way to or from a Washington State school (e.g., at the bus stop), ***or***
   c. at an event sponsored by a Washington State school (e.g., sporting event, field trip, etc.), ***and***
4. The report had to be complete enough that members of the research committee could, independently of one another, screen it for internal consistency (e.g., the date-of-birth and the target's age must agree) and verifiable facts.[6]

Finally, an incident was excluded if the interviewer or the research team had serious reason to be skeptical about the call's legitimacy, for example if the caller's tone of voice seemed incongruent with the severity of a recent incident.

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[5] *The Transgender community is still "young and defining itself," according to self-described Transgender author Leslie Feinberg. So the language with which people describe themselves is in flux. This Report uses the term* **Transgender**, *as Feinberg does, as an umbrella term to include those who are Transsexual, Intersexual, or Transgender.*

- *Transsexual persons (pre, post, or non-operative) are those who are biologically one sex (at birth), but emotionally and spiritually the other.*
- *Intersexual people (referred to in the past as "hermaphrodites") are those who were born with both male and femal physical characteristics chromosomally and/or anatomically.*
- *Transgender is a broad term often chosen by individuals who are emotionally neither sex or both sexes or whose gender role expression is significantly different from what society expects of people of their sex. Some Transgender people cross-dress some of the time, some cross-dress all the time, and some cross the gender lines in other ways. Gender expression is much more complex than what one wears.*

Some people who cross-dress (who used to be described as "transvestites") do not define themselves as Transgender. Many Transgender people are heterosexual and some are homosexual; all are vulnerable to the same kinds of harassment and violence that homosexual individuals face. See Feinberg's Transgender Warriors: Making History From Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman *(1996 Beacon Press) for more information.*

[6] *In an effort to balance the commitment of the Safe Schools Project to protect callers' confidentiality with the need to verify information, the only facts verified by the research team were those that were easily obtainable from public record. For instance, the name of the school, if provided by the caller, must be a real school and not a pseudonym.*

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Incident Categories and Narratives

Note: Certain language in the narratives that follow may offend some readers. It is language heard daily in our schools. The stories have been described here without censorship or softening of the sometimes brutal experiences as they were reported. However, discretion is advised when using these stories (as written) as case studies for classroom discussion. Details have, in a few instances, been omitted or changed to protect the confidentiality of the parties involved; the essence of each story is true to what was reported.

Only the fourteen incidents reported to the Project between June, 1996 and June, 1997 are described below. For narratives of incident reports received in the *previous* two years, see the Safe Schools website: **http://members.tripod.com/~claytoly/ssp_home** and click on "Incident Categories and Narratives"

Category 1: One-Time, Climate Setting Incidents

Sixteen reports in the first four years of the Project have entailed name-calling, the telling of offensive jokes, etc. They were almost always witnessed. An incident was included in this category only if the caller did ***not*** report that it was part of an on-going pattern in which the same person was being targeted repeatedly or in which the same offender(s) were offending repeatedly. Three Category 1 incidents were reported in the 1996/97 school year:

Incident #1

You Decide ... Is it *Guys Bragging* or is it *A Recipe For a Hostile Environment?*

Two students start bragging about their weekend exploits. They talk about having been to Seattle. They brag that they went to a park known as a gathering place for Gay men. They say they searched for and beat up men who they believed were Gay. A teacher's aide expresses disapproval of Gay- bashing, but allows the bragging to continue.

The substitute teacher feels scared and sick to her stomach. Her greatest concern is the possible intimidating effect of the bragging on two of the braggarts' classmates who have told her they are Lesbian. She's worried, too, about her job, but she approaches the principal anyway. The principal is concerned and asks the "sub" what she would like done about it. She says she would like to have a school site team talk to the three boys. She would like the school to notify their parents and file a police report. Later, she tells an interviewer that she thinks at least the conversation with a school site team will take place. She says she wishes counseling were also made available to the Lesbian students. And, in an ideal world, she says, there would be education for all staff and students about Gay and Lesbian issues to reduce the peer approval for bragging about such horrific behavior in the first place.

Incident #2

You Decide ... Is it *Time To "Keep It Down"* or is it *Don't Dare Defend Gay People?*

The young woman who called the Project about this incident has been observing anti-gay remarks at school — not directed at her, just in general — since the third grade. She says that her classmates "constantly pick at someone who they believe [is Gay or Lesbian] or [who they] just want to destroy, even when they know the person isn't Gay."

But now, in eighth grade, she is learning what it feels like to be personally attacked. The sequence of events actually starts at a high school. The principal *there* asks a guest speaker with HIV to leave after the speaker mentions that he's Gay. Schools all over the state hear about the incident, including students at the caller's middle school.

They start talking, in class, about what happened. The teacher decides to allow the discussion. Students take sides in support of and against Gay people. The most vocal of those who oppose Gay people says they should all be shot. He laughs at the half dozen classmates who support Gay rights and says that they

must be Gay, themselves. The teacher's involvement is just to ask the class to "keep it down."

After class, the "ring leader" continues to say "really offensive things" to the caller and the others in the class who defended Gay people. The caller says, "At first [we] pretended not to care, but ... after [rumors about our sexuality began to spread], it got to [us]."

She says she was proud of how she handled the situation, but since it happened, she's been feeling sick more often. In fact, she says that she dropped the class and that she still feels self-conscious and unsafe at school. She wishes that the principal had come to the class when things started to get mean and had told the students, especially the "ring leader," that personal attacks wouldn't be tolerated. She wishes they'd been warned that further talk of that kind would be punished.

Incident #3

You Decide ... Is it *Freedom of Speech* or is it *"Pretty Extreme"*?

"Is it true that condoms have microscopic holes and aren't safe?" The junior high school student who asks this question at a family planning clinic explains that her teacher told the class this. But she says she didn't know whether to believe him because, she says, "he was pretty extreme." The clinic staff person explains the facts (that latex condoms greatly reduce — but don't eliminate — the risk of pregnancy and infection). Then the staff person asks the patient what she means when she says this teacher is "pretty extreme."

The teen recalls that her teacher said, for instance, "Condoms don't work," and "Lesbians and Gays are sinners." He told her class that people who have AIDS deserve to burn in hell. The teen describes how upset one of her classmates was about this last statement. This classmate's father is Gay. He also has AIDS and was ill at the time. The patient says that she comforted her fellow student after class.

The clinic staff person calls the Safe Schools Project. She protects the patient's confidentiality, but she describes their conversation. She says that, although no single individual was targeted, the teacher's statements seem to have "set a tone for what would be tolerated and what would not."

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Category 2: On-Going Verbal and Other Harassment

Most of the thirty-four Category 2 incidents reported to date were part of a *pattern* of harassment lasting weeks, months or, in some cases, more than a year. The others involved an offender "outing" someone (spreading rumors about his or her sexual orientation). The latter were classified as "on-going," because the life of a rumor can be years. It can trigger harassment and violence by others. In order to be considered a Category 2 offense, the incident needed to involve *either* someone "outing" the targeted individual *or* at least some of the same offender(s)[7] and/or the same targeted person(s) on multiple occasions. Incidents were ***not*** included in this Category if there was anything physical done to the targeted person.[8]

Incident #4

A Drop in An Ocean of Hate?

Editor's note: Incident Four is the kind of event that is rarely reported to the Safe Schools Project, because it is so commonplace — a yelled slur and it's over. Its power is in its publicness and its painful regularity.

For two years, the students who attend the Gay/Lesbian support group have told their facilitators about being harassed at school on a regular basis. They've described being the targets at school of anti-gay graffiti, embarrassing notes, and rumors. Today is the first time one of the adult-facilitators actually witnesses harassment. Two students are minding their own business, walking to their car after group. "Faggots!" The slur is repeated several times.

The adult calls Safe Schools and describes the emotional damage of this one incident as "minor." But he says it was still upsetting to the students at whom it was directed. He says it left them feeling angry. Once again.

Incident #5

She Doesn't "Fit Gay Stereotypes"

It is sixth period. There is a particular group of five students (characterized by the respondent as four male "jocks" and a "preppy" young woman) who frequently engage in anti-gay harassment. It's not the first time they have targeted a particular 16 year-old young woman. Today, they call her a "dyke" and a "lesbo." Her shocked, angry reaction is, "What the hell?" Two of her classmates come up to her afterwards to express their anger at the offenders and to voice their support. One is astonished by the incident and troubled that the teacher may not have even noticed. This "ally" seeks out a second teacher for help.

Both teachers and a school counselor talk with the targeted student. It is not reported why they didn't transfer the offenders out of the class. But they do help the *targeted* young woman to transfer to a different, more supportive, class and they put her in contact with a social worker.

The second teacher, who later calls the Project about the incident, says that he doesn't know how the assailants even picked their target out. She is Lesbian, but she's not "out" about it. And, he adds, she "does not fit Gay stereotypes." He says the whole incident has made him more vigilant "for any kind of harassment, especially in [his] classroom." And he says it has heightened his own "awareness of homophobia."

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[7] *Or a similar enough modus operandi to appear likely that it was the same perpetrators on more than one occasion.*

[8] *In some cases the* pattern *of incidents included physical violence, but the* particular *incident the caller chose to focus on did not, therefore, they are classified here as Category Two incidents, rather than Category Three or Four.*

12 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

It's Not the Honest Disapproval; It's the Attacks

Incident #6

After a year of abuse at the hands of her peers, she calls the Safe Schools Project. Over this year, her classmates have barked at her and told her she has AIDS; they have given her embarrassing or sexual notes; they have cornered her, threatened her, shoved her and thrown things at her.

One incident in the middle of her sophomore year, however, isn't physical. It's just scary. At about 1:00 p.m., one young man comes up to her in the hall, with five or six other guys. He accuses her of "looking at" his girlfriend. He tells her, "It's sick to be a Lesbian" and threatens to "kick [her] ass." He invokes the Bible, telling her that she is going to Hell. He calls her a "dyke" and a "queer." Most of the witnesses laugh, but one of the young woman's friends defends her.

Does she wish the offender would get disciplined? No. She wants him educated. She says, "I wouldn't want him kicked out. I would want him to spend the day with a Gay person."

Since this incident, she has changed schools. She says, "I feel bad because [it's as if] I ran away from the problem, but at least now I can go to school." And after a couple of months at her new school, she says "I have only had one person say she didn't like me because I'm a Lesbian [at this school]. But that was OK; she was honest." So it isn't the honest disapproval that has worn her down, as much as the attacks and threats. Because of the threats she started avoiding parts of the school building and grounds. She changed the way she got to and from school. She says that it affected her grades and made her doubt whether she has what it takes to graduate. And she says the whole experience led her to attempt suicide. Fortunately, she's doing better now that she's in a safer environment. She attends a support group and she says she's doing "fine."

The Unauthorized Newsletter

Incident #7

He's a high school sophomore. He's been experiencing harassment at school for years, but for the last twelve months, it's been a daily phenomenon. Sometimes, it's even physical. Students have followed him, cornered him, shoved him, spit at him and hit him. One science teacher has, on "numerous" occasions, imitated a stereotypical Gay man.

Finally, the daily harassment by one particular student becomes unbearable: words like "queer" and "buttfucker" are punctuated with offensive hand gestures and jokes. The targeted sophomore goes to the building administration for help. They bring in the offender and "tell him to stop."

In apparent retribution for getting him in trouble, the perpetrator "gets a group of [three] friends together to call [their classmate] names in gym class." About thirty students witness the name-calling. Their reactions vary. Some people laugh. Some "stare at him as a freak." The targeted youth, feeling very embarrassed and angry, goes to the principal again. He reports that the problem is escalating. The principal responds by suspending the offender from P.E. class for one day, but doesn't put the incident on the offender's school record. The student describes to a sympathetic teacher having felt as if the principal *really* said, "I don't want to hear about it. Go away."

A female friend of the targeted youth, enraged by the principal's response, decides to publish an unauthorized newsletter. In it she urges fellow students not to harass their Gay peers and she charges that the school doesn't protect its Gay students. She begins handing the newsletter out around campus and is promptly suspended ... not from a single class, as the offender was, but from school.

One teacher calls to report the whole sequence of events. He thinks the administration has conveyed a simple, cruel message: ***You will get a "harder slap on the hand if [you] print material discouraging harassment" than for harassment itself.***

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Category 3: Physical Harassment and/or Sexual Assault, Short of Rape

Each Category 3 event involved touch or attempted touch. Someone might have spit at the targeted person or thrown something at them, even if it didn't actually hit. Or someone may have followed or rubbed up against them. Shoving incidents were included in this category, but ***not*** incidents where someone was hit, punched, kicked or assaulted with a weapon. Fourteen Category 3 incidents have been reported since the Project began; two of them this year.

Incident #8

The Cost of A Kiss

Some of their peers started harassing them last year, when they were a sophomore and a junior. It continued this fall. Finally, just wanting to be together, the two decide to go to a dance. Some fellow students make offensive comments to them at that dance, because both are young women. But others show their support. The next Monday, however, when the couple shares a kiss, the harassment escalates. People call them slurs. One student comes right up to them in the hallway and says, "This is wrong, what you are doing ... a girl with a girl." Three or four students follow them and block their path. Twenty or more others watch as someone shoves the young women and spits at them. The girls are scared; they run. And they leave school early that day.

A couple of those who witnessed the attack go to a school counselor about it. But the damage has already been done: the girls are not only enraged, they are overwhelmed. One of them tries to commit suicide the next day. Her family, sad and concerned, helps her get hospitalized for mental health observation.

Back at school, the staff respond. At first, some blame the victims, asserting that "they shouldn't have been kissing." Others, however, respond "quickly and efficiently," according to the district-level administrator who later calls the Safe Schools Project.

She says that staff investigated the incident. The perpetrators were privately reprimanded. Administrators were alerted by e-mail to what had occurred so they could be on alert for future incidents.

Still, the administrator who calls Safe Schools expressed a wish: that this sort of incident be handled in the future with an all-school assembly "to address this issue head-on and to provide a safer, more friendly environment for *all* students to be in."

Incident #9

"I Can Turn You Around"

They are best friends. One young woman gives the other a kiss on the cheek at the prom and their dates "decide [they] are Gay." The rumor is spread and the harassment begins. People tell them, "Silly faggots; dicks are for chicks." People "call [them] 'dykes' all the time."

Today, the two friends are hanging out near the cafeteria when two guys start calling them "stupid dykes." They push the girls and brush against them in a sexual way. Other guys, perhaps ten altogether, join in. "I can turn you around." "Why don't you get a real man?"

When one of the girls calls Safe Schools, she says her reaction was surprise and humiliation. She says that, with a school counselor's help, she went to the principal. The principal, she says, "denied it ever happened."

"How would he know?!" she asks. "He wasn't even there!"

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Category 4: Physical Assaults

Nineteen incidents have been reported to the Project in which someone was hit, punched, kicked and/or attacked with a weapon. This figure excludes the rapes, all of which are contained in Category 5 (page 13). Six of the targeted children and teens who were physically assaulted were treated by doctors (four of them in emergency rooms) and a seventh was hospitalized. At least four reported their assaults to the police and in at least three cases assailants were prosecuted and convicted. One assault reported in 1995 by the mother of a targeted youth was a precipitating factor in her son's committing suicide one month after the attack.

Incident #10

"No One Else's Business"

A group of students at this middle school call a lot of people Gay or Lesbian. They told one student her brother was a "fag" because he wore glasses. They "freak out when they think someone is Gay or Lesbian" and they say it is "sick" and "wrong." They tell ugly anti-gay jokes.

Now, they have decided that one eighth grader in particular is Gay. One of them grabs his backpack and starts kicking it around. They tear it. They write "I'm a fag" on the back of the backpack. When he tries to mark it out, they accuse him of trying to highlight it. They laugh and throw things at him. And then two of them physically attack him, shoving and punching him "really hard" on his shoulders and arms and head. He doesn't fight back. Besides the group of about a dozen offenders, another seven or so students witness the whole thing. A teacher finally happens upon the scene and stops the assault.

One of the students who saw it all, later defends the targeted young man to the teacher, explaining that he "didn't do anything." She describes the teacher as somewhat supportive. She says she thinks the offenders were told, in private, that their behavior was "inappropriate," but she wishes they had been disciplined in some way, too. She says, "If the kid is Gay, it is no one else's business unless he wants it to be."

Incident #11

The Teacher Didn't Know What To Do, But "Did A *GOOD* Job" Anyway

He was fifteen years old when he started at this school in September. From day one, he was open about being Gay and would speak up about Gay civil rights. From day one, his fellow students harassed him. They would do or say something embarrassing or threatening perhaps four times a week on average (write graffiti about him, throw food at him, push him around, spit on him).

Then one day in December, he's alone in the locker room changing into his pep squad uniform before a basketball game. A fellow student walks in, sees him, and declares that the locker room is for men and that the Gay young man is not a man. When the targeted youth verbally defends himself ("I'm just as much a woman or man as you are"), the other student attacks him physically, cornering him and shoving him hard against a locker.

As soon as the assailant leaves, the youth goes to find a teacher. Shaking and crying, physically bruised and emotionally "devastated," he relates what happened. (Later, he will tell an interviewer that this particular teacher didn't know how to respond, but "did a ***good*** job" anyway.) The teacher believes him, helps him calm down, and is just very supportive. Once he gathers himself together, the student goes to the Principal for help. With no witnesses, it's one student's word against another's and the Principal doesn't seem to believe the student was really assaulted.

It isn't until a week later, when a teacher witnesses the same student verbally assaulting him, that he is able, with the teacher and a guardian as allies, to convince the Principal to suspend the assailant.

Even then, he says he would have liked a little education and counseling along with the discipline. He wishes the assailant had been required to "sit in on a Gay/Lesbian panel" and to undergo therapy, just as he needed therapy after the assault. But he says that his openness about what happened may have made school a little safer for "new young students" (one, he says, in particular). That, at least, is a source of pride for him.

Incident #12

"Why Can't I Be Normal?"

She was in the eighth grade when the "almost daily" harassment started. But it certainly wasn't just a middle school phenomenon. In January of her senior year, it's still happening. In fact, this time it's particularly brutal.

It is 9:00 p.m. She has just served on the color guard at a basketball game. After the game, as she's leaving the gym, two girls she doesn't even know attack her in the parking lot, apparently for how she looks. They yell "*God Damn* dyke bitch" and they beat her up, leaving her with a swollen lip and various bruises.

Three days after the incident, she confides in a teacher, who in turn helps her to call the Safe Schools Project. When the interviewer asks her, through the teacher, to describe how she felt at the time of the assault, she says she was in pain, physically, and that she had a "why-can't-I-be-normal" feeling. The years of abuse at the hands of her peers have made her self-conscious and lonely and scared. And although she does feel supported by her friends and this one teacher, and somewhat supported by her family, she has attempted suicide at least once over the years because of the abuse. She has not reported any of the incidents to the Principal. And she has asked the teacher in whom she confided about this incident not to go to the Principal either. She "doesn't want to make trouble." And she's afraid that "he might bring it up" in the letters of recommendation she is going to need as she gets ready to graduate.

The interviewer asks how is she doing now. She says simply, "I don't want to say" ... which says it all.

Incident # 13:

One incident reported to the Project this year provides us with a fascinating study of differing perspectives. Three people called in regarding the same event. When multiple individuals have reported a single incident in the past, their reports have been combined into a single narrative in the Annual Report. This time, however, the accounts are different enough that the research team wanted the reader to see them side-by-side.

A Beating With An Audience
Three Versions of One Incident

The School Employee's Account of What Happened:

This adult was not surprised by what happened; she had "seen it coming for a while." She hasn't been aware of any previous *physical* assaults at her school, but she does know that Gay students have been harassed (told, for instance that it is "lame" to be Gay) and threatened. She estimates that it's been happening to someone about once a week and she knows that this particular youth was threatened last year. In defense of her school, she says that Lesbians aren't treated badly there; only boys who are perceived to be Gay. She says that people at her school "aren't malicious." They "try to get along." But some have what she calls a "cowboy mentality" and think that "different equals bad and scary."

She says it began when a student, whom she describes as Gay, gave some flowers to another young man at school. The girlfriend of the young man who *received* the flowers confronted the student who *gave* the flowers. She says the giver of the flowers punched the young woman. They were "broken up." Then, according to the school employee, the two students went into a room and talked about the incident.

Next, she says the giver of the flowers told a group of male students that he was Gay and they "reacted by beating him up." She doesn't think his injuries were serious enough to require first aid, but she thinks the beating caused "a lot" of emotional hurt. She says that thirty or so students and three teachers witnessed the beating. And she says that the adults were upset and appalled and that they intervened to defend and support the targeted youth. She also says that the adult witnesses tried to get help for the targeted student afterwards.

Her perception is that there was "'inappropriate behavior' on both sides." She says the Principal handled the whole thing well, suspending the targeted youth for assaulting the young woman and also suspending the group of students who assaulted *him*. She says that, the next day, the Principal arranged "sensitivity training" for staff and students in what she describes as a "multiple year strategy." She is "proud" of how the incident was handled.

The Mom's Account of What Happened:

The Mom mostly agrees that this incident was handled well ... but she is upset and angry about the years of unchecked abuse that led up to it. Her son hasn't

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ever been "out" about being Gay, according to the mom, but rumors started five or six years ago, in junior high. That's when the "verbal and physical harassment started." Someone there even poked him with a hypodermic needle. Since he's been in high school, he has switched schools twice to escape the abuse and has been on medication for depression because of it. Even teachers have contributed to the problem. One told her son, "Come on ... I don't need another girl in my class." Students have told him, "We don't want any fags at our school," and, "You're dead, fag." He even got a harassing letter in the mail. By his senior year, he was experiencing "almost daily" harassment.

This particular incident, she says, started when a group of boys went looking for him in "supposed retaliation" for an incident the day before when a girl said he hit her. He says he didn't. Anyway, this group of angry peers went looking for her son and spread the word that there would be a beating ("The Fag's going to get it."). They found him in a classroom working on the computer. They opened the blinds so other students could watch from the hallway and then a group of seven or eight, male and female, proceeded to beat and kick him. Of the twenty or thirty students who witnessed the incident, only two said or did anything to defend him. The mom says that one staff person finally came into the room after the beating had started and began to pull students off of her son.

She says that counselors and teachers were upset about what had happened, but that the school did not call the parents. Her son called 911 himself, and when police didn't arrive, he called his mother. His dad picked him up at school. His parents took him to the doctor for his sore ribs, bruises and abrasions.

Nonetheless, the mom characterizes the Principal as "very supportive" since the incident. He made a public statement afterwards about not tolerating such offenses and he suspended six of the assailants. She says that he is the only administrator in all these years, who has ever done anything to protect her son, however ... and no matter how this ***one*** incident was handled, she is upset and angry.

The Targeted Youth's Own Account of What Happened:

It started back in seventh grade, about five years ago. The youth says, "They just started calling me faggot and queer because I 'didn't walk like a man'." He says, "There was never a day that went by that I wasn't harassed in some way." Somebody left him love letters to guys, on which they'd forged his signature. Someone pulled a knife on him at school and threatened to kill him. Someone stabbed him with a hypodermic needle. Teachers even joined in the harassment. One teacher, perceiving him to be Gay, challenged him for donating blood. Still another "outed" him in front of a whole class, referring to him as Gay. And another teacher actually called him a "sissy" in front of his classmates and told him he was not a real man. Students have told him he's going to hell. They've cornered him and brushed up against him in a sexual way, thrown cans of pop and oranges at him. He says, "I went to counselors and principals all the time, so did my parents."

By his senior year he was experiencing harassment "way more than once a day." This particular day, he says, he doesn't know why the attackers came after him. He says, "I guess it was just building up." He was in the photography classroom at school, when eight kids confronted him. For over an hour they threatened him, explaining that other students were waiting in the hall and that he should go out there and fight them. He says he stayed in the classroom for protection, but that the teacher who heard the threat left for lunch anyway.

Then this group of eight offenders beat and kicked him, while thirty student onlookers watched. He guesses that twenty or so cheered and encouraged the attack. He says there were no adult witnesses.

The assault left him, he says, with abrasions, cracked ribs, bruises, and cuts from the kicks, and with headaches and weeks of blurry eyesight. Afterward, he says, he called his Mom. The Vice Principal, however, wanted him to get off the phone. He said if the young man didn't get off the phone, he wouldn't help him.

A couple of days after the assault, this same VP called the student into his office. It seems that other students had told the VP that the targeted young man was Gay. He isn't out at school, however, although he does describe himself to a Safe

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Schools interviewer as Bisexual. It was strictly other students' conjecture. So when the VP asked him if it was true that he was Gay, he said, "I don't know." Frankly, he didn't think it was any of the adult's business.

In the days that followed, most of the other adults in his life were supportive. He says he has found the Principal and some of the teachers supportive. He says the school security guards have "helped him and felt bad." The school counselor has "been on [his] side." His parents and the police have been supportive, too.

Editor's note: Six of the assailants in Incident # 13 were suspended and five have since been convicted.

He says there is "a little less harassment" at school since the beating, but he wishes the principal could assure him that what's happened to him "would never happen to anyone ever again."

Category 5: Gang Rape

All of the eight rapes reported to date have involved multiple assailants. Only two, however, were reported to any school, law enforcement, or child protective authorities. In three cases, besides raping the person, the attackers also urinated on him or her. In two cases, they ejaculated on the targeted individuals. In one, they vomited on the person. In one case they broke a teen's hand. Seven of the eight rapes were part of on-going patterns of abuse, lasting up to a year. Two people (one partner and one good friend of a rape victim) have reported being forced to watch the rapes.

Five of the eight incidents have involved groups of male offenders. In three of those cases, their targets were female; in two, they raped other boys. The other three rape incidents have involved mixed groups of offenders (multiple males and a female in each case). These mixed groups have raped a boy in one instance and girls in two instances. The only rape reported *this* year involved an adult.

Incident #14

Child Protective Services Report

Four high school students, all young men, discover that a teacher at their school is romantically involved with a former student. They follow the two women and take pictures of them.

For two or three weeks, several times a week, they verbally attack and threaten the teacher, calling her a "dyke" and a child molester, apparently in the belief that the relationship between the two women began when one was a student. The teacher, who later calls the Safe Schools Project, denies that allegation vehemently. She says that she did not seek help, however, during these few weeks because she was fearful of being publicly accused of sexual abuse. She says she was scared that, true or not, the allegation would be believed.

Then one day after school, she says, the four young men threatened to distribute the photographs, unless she did as they said. They got her to go into a locker room at school. There, she says, they "forced [her] to have sex" with a female student, a senior, while they watched. Two of them ejaculated on the teacher *and* the student. Then they left.

Editor's note: Were both individuals raped or was the adult among the offenders? The caller clearly considered herself a victim, and expressed sorrow and guilt as well as fear. The Research Team, however, counts her as an offender as well as a target ... not necessarily in a legal sense, but in a moral one. She acted under threat of a terrible ordeal, probable loss of her career, and possible criminal action, but she did not express fear for her life. Only a judge and jury could decide whether her actions were criminal. But clearly she acted out of fright and panic, not basing her decisions on the best interests of the student with whom she was coerced into having sex. The first concern of the Safe Schools Project is the safety of children.

Because the Project has an obligation to try to get help for the young person involved in this incident, the case was reported to Child Protective Services. The caller, however, had declined to give her name or much identifying information. As far as we know, CPS did not have enough information to investigate the incident ... although, from a research perspective, in which many reports are made anonymously, we do consider this to be a credible report.

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Findings of the Safe Schools Project, 1994-1997 — with Discussion

Everyone is Vulnerable.

What makes a person vulnerable to anti-gay harassment and violence? A number of obvious characteristics can be ruled out. First, the individual's age is apparently not the determinant. Targeted individuals in these 91 incidents have ranged in age from seven years old through adulthood. Nor does a person's gender seem to make a difference. Nearly equal numbers of people of both genders have been targeted in these incidents.

The person's race doesn't seem to matter much, either, with respect to being vulnerable to anti-gay harassment or violence. People with various racial identities have reported being targeted. (They have described themselves as: "African-American" or "Black," "Black/White/Chinese," "Caucasian" or "White" or "European-American," "Irish/Finnish/Italian," "Hispanic," "Hispanic/Creole," "Hispanic/White," "Korean/White," "Lakota," "Native American," "Native-American/Caucasian," "Indian/African-American," and "Multiracial".) Altogether, 75% of targeted respondents who indicated a racial identity could be described as White and 25%, as People of Color. Statewide, 77% of public school students are White and 23%, People of Color.

It also doesn't make much difference where a person lives. Incidents have been reported from large urban districts, suburbs and smaller towns, and rural areas (See Table 1, below), as well as a tribal school and a private Christian school. They have been reported from Benton, King, Lewis, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, Thurston, Whatcom and Yakima Counties.

Table 1: Geographic Diversity Of Incidents

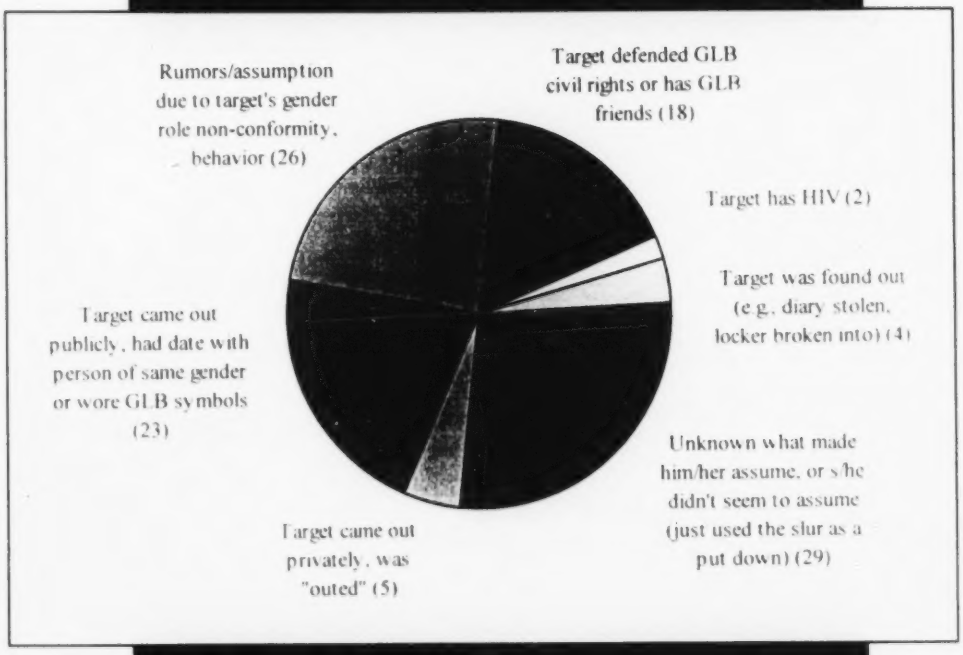
Districts of 1,000 to 5,000 Students	Districts of 5,000 to 20,000 Students	Districts of 20,000 to over 40,000 Students
Arlington	Auburn	Federal Way
Chehalis	Bellevue	Kent
Fife	Bellingham	Lake Washington
Lake Stevens	Bethel	Seattle
Mercer Island	Edmonds	Spokane
Riverview	Everett	Tacoma
Sultan	Highline	
Toppenish	Marysville	
	North Thurston	
	Northshore	
	Olympia	
	Puyallup	
	Renton	
	Richland	
	Shoreline	
	Tumwater	

***Even a person's actual sexual orientation is apparently not the primary determinant of whether they are targeted. More often than not, these offenders had no direct knowledge of the targeted people's orientations and some targets (at least six) were heterosexual.**[a]*

So what is the salient factor that makes a person vulnerable to anti-gay harassment and violence? It seems to be simply the offender's ***perception*** of the targeted person's orientation. It is instructive to examine what made the offender think the target was Gay or Lesbian in these incidents. (See Figure 1, below.)

Figure 1:

What Made the Offenders Think These 107 Targets Were Gay or Lesbian?


Rumors/assumption due to target's gender role non-conformity, behavior (26)
Target defended GLB civil rights or has GLB friends (18)
Target has HIV (2)
Target was found out (e.g., diary stolen, locker broken into) (4)
Target came out publicly, had date with person of same gender or wore GLB symbols (23)
Unknown what made him/her assume, or s/he didn't seem to assume (just used the slur as a put down) (29)
Target came out privately, was "outed" (5)

Some readers may believe that it was the targets' own fault that they were attacked, if they were gender-role non-conforming in their style of clothes, hair or manner. How different is that assertion than the claim, no longer valid in rape trials, that a woman's style of dress was the cause of her being raped? Members of the research team have worked with young people with gender-bending ways of dressing and carrying themselves. Some of them have *always*, since preschool, had gender role expressions that differed from what was expected. Their behavior, which may seem to other people like "affectation" or intentional "defiance" of convention, may simply be that child's most natural, most honest way of being. Other youth say that finding such styles is much like "coming home." Until they do they are often wearing very heavy, painful social masks, engaging in what feels like constant play-acting or a kind of "reverse drag."

The same can be said about "coming out." People "come out" (communicate their sexual orientations, in subtle or forthright ways) for all sorts of reasons. Perhaps the two reasons youth cite most often are that they are exhausted and lonely. Trying to "pass" as heterosexual takes tremendous energy (energy that, otherwise, might be going into academics) and it detaches them from friends and family.

That is ***not*** to say that the Safe Schools Coalition ***recommends*** that sexual minority students, parents, or school employees "come out." Being *open* about your sexual minority status is a very personal choice, with costs as well as benefits. The costs range from possible loss of regard to serious physical assault. The benefits include a sense of integrity and honesty that can free a person's energy for learning and/or teaching. And the benefits are not all personal. It is in children's best interest, for example, for ordinary Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender adults to be visible as role models. Therefore, **the Coalition believes that people deserve support, regardless of their decisions about how open to be.**

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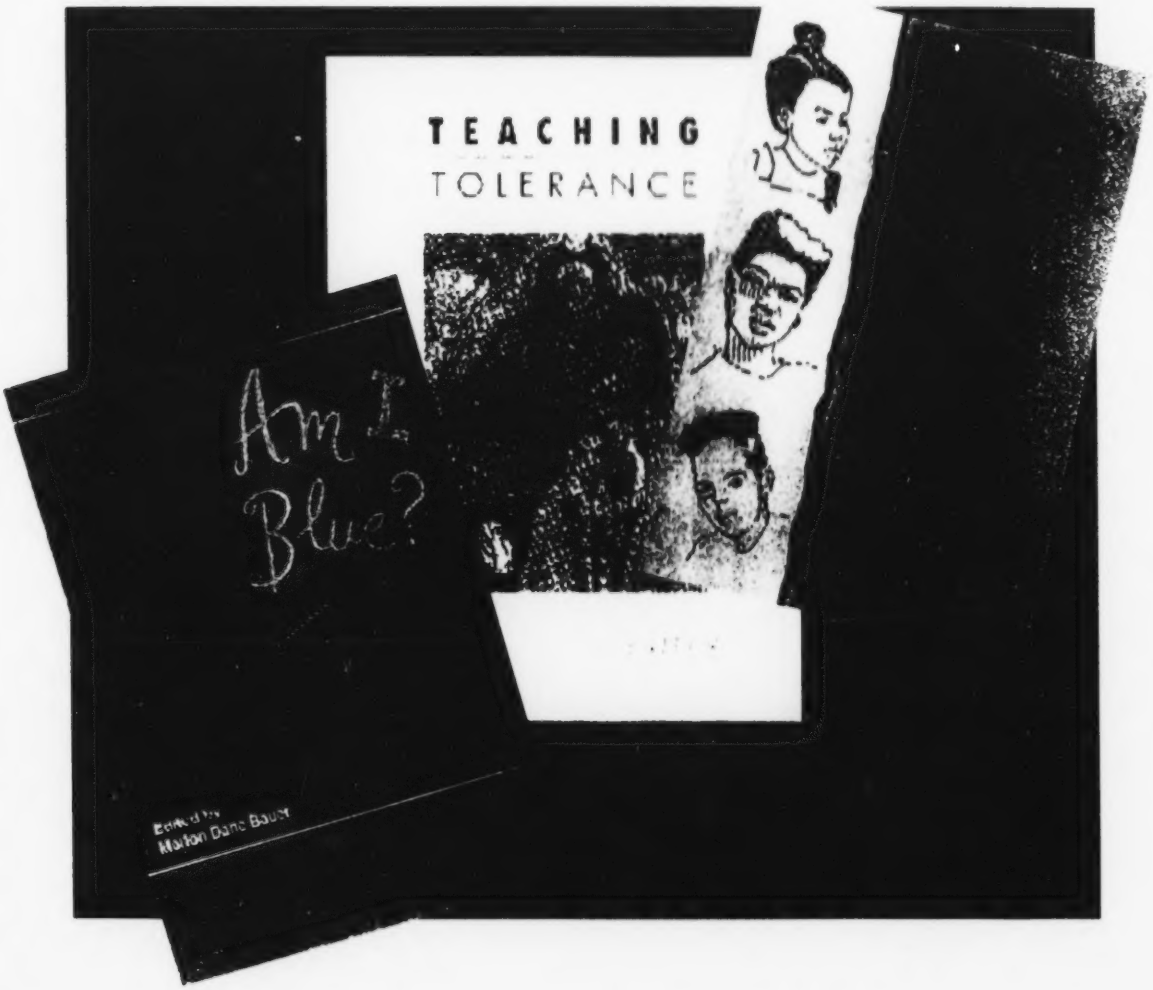
[a] The sexual orientations of another 48 targeted people are unknown, either because someone other than the target reported the incident and did not know (or, in some cases, was not asked) the target's orientation or because the targeted person declined to identify their orientation or said they weren't sure of it.

Is it logical to anticipate rejection when you adopt (or reclaim) unconventional ways or acknowledge your minority status? In modern Western culture, maybe. Is it entirely or even primarily the fault of the school that society has such rigid standards of normalcy? No. Does the school have a responsibility, regardless, to do what it can to provide a safe, productive learning environment? We think so.

What's more, we do not believe that providing a safe environment can start in high school. We think that, at every level, educators have a responsibility to teach children about the panorama of differences among human beings, providing accurate information about sexual diversity, and about prejudice. **We believe that education is the obvious and most fundamental way to prevent anti-gay sexual harassment and violence.**



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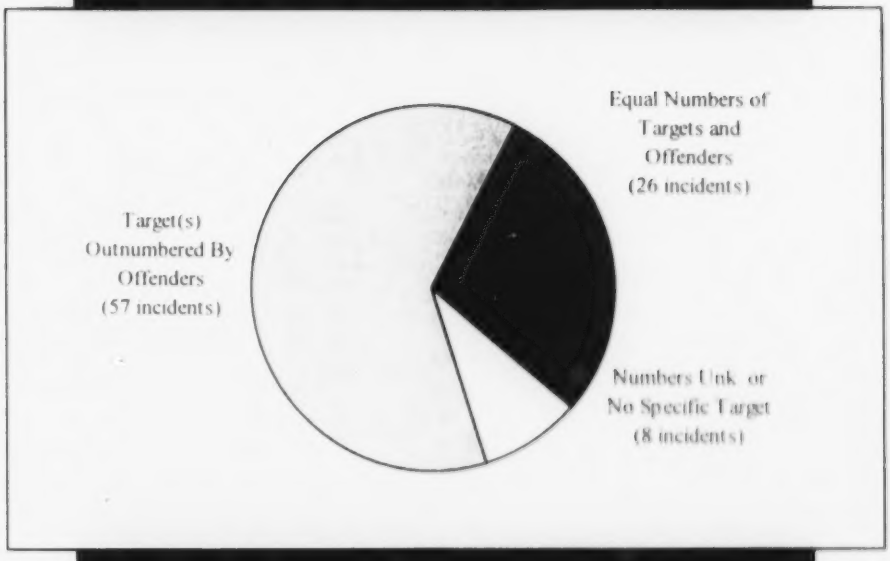
Offenders Outnumbered The People They Targeted By 3 Against 1.

Perhaps the most striking element of the incidents reported in the first four years of the Project is the consistency with which the offenders have outnumbered the individuals they attacked. The most common scenario has involved a single targeted person and multiple offenders.

Figure 2:

Relative Numbers of Targets and Offenders in These 91 Incidents


Equal Numbers of Targets and Offenders (26 incidents)
Target(s) Outnumbered By Offenders (57 incidents)
Numbers Unk. or No Specific Target (8 incidents)

In one incident reported last year, vandals damaged an individual's property; the number of offenders is unknown. Seven other incidents were aimed at no one in particular (e.g., a teacher's disparaging Lesbian people in general, a pep rally's use of Gay-bashing as comedy). The "victims" in these incidents are not countable; everyone who observes them is a victim in a sense. A lot of people are left feeling hurt, offended, scared or guilty for not speaking up. And when these events go unchallenged, they teach intolerance and disrespect to *every* student present, including student offenders.

In the other 83 of the 91 incidents reported to the Project in its first four years, ***a total of 109 people were harassed or attacked, by a total of at least — estimating conservatively — 301 offenders.***[10] Thus, the ratio of offenders to targets in the incidents reported to the Project is nearly three against one. Unfortunately, that figure is remaining remarkably constant even as the number of incident reports grows from year to year.

[10] *Counting all incidents with 10+ offenders as 10, because precision is impossible in those cases.*

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Many of the Targeted Youth Took Flight.

The resilience of targeted young people is becoming evident in the Safe Schools research data. One form their self-protection takes, especially when the abuse continues over time, is simply to escape. First, many targets "tuned out" psychologically; specifically, 33 of 52 youths who reported the incident themselves have indicated that the harassment made it more difficult to concentrate in class. When "tuning out" didn't provide enough protection, 20 targeted youths said that they cut one or more specific classes. ***Nine reported dropping a class. Fifteen disclosed having skipped whole days of school.***

This finding from the Safe Schools Project — that skipping school is a common response to harassment — concurs with the findings of the 1995 Seattle Teen Health Risk Survey (SEA), a quantitative study of over 8,400 high school students. SEA found that about one in seven Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual (GLB) respondents (9.2% of GLB students who had NOT been harassed because of their orientation; 21.9% of those who had) had missed at least one day of school in the past month out of fear for their safety. Even those who had *never* been harassed for their orientations were 74% more likely than non-harassed Heterosexual students to report having skipped whole days due to fear.

However, 6% of Heterosexual students said that they, too, had experienced anti-gay harassment (despite their *actual* sexual orientations). Of this group, 16.4 % admitted having cut whole days of school out of fear, compared with 5.3% of those who hadn't been targeted in this way. A person clearly does not need to *be* Gay to be harassed for being *perceived* that way. And, regardless of his or her actual orientation, the harassment may prompt the person to take flight.

Figure 3:

Seattle Teen Health Risk Survey

Percent of SEA Respondents Who Reported Missing School In the Past Month Due to Fear

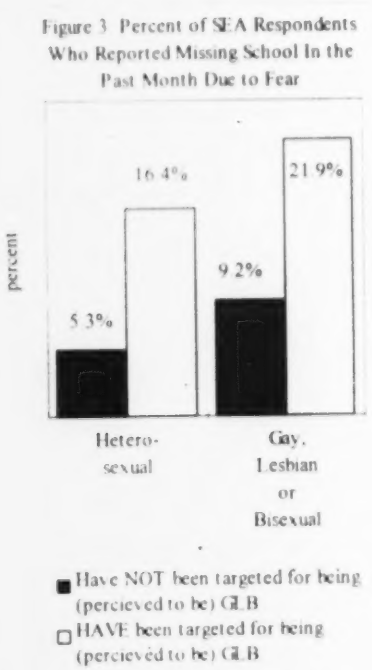


Figure 3 Percent of SEA Respondents Who Reported Missing School In the Past Month Due to Fear
percent
16.4%
21.9%
9.2%
5.3%
Hetero-sexual
Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual
Have NOT been targeted for being (percieved to be) GLB
HAVE been targeted for being (percieved to be) GLB

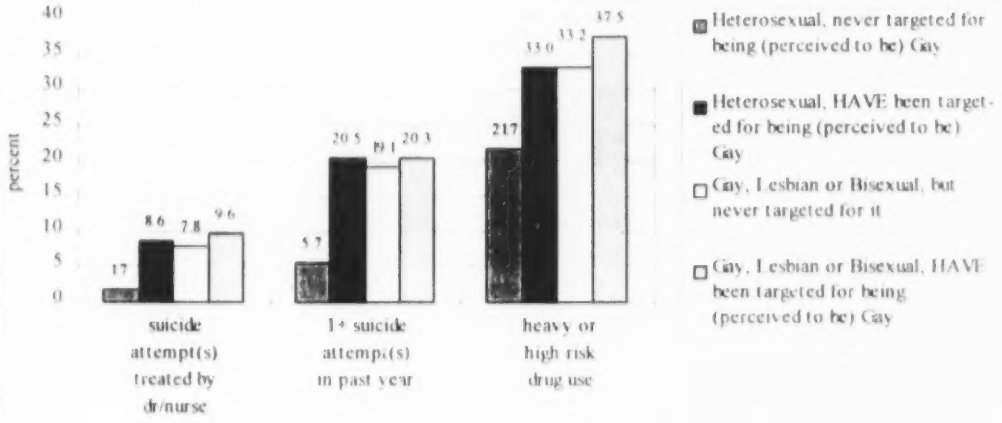
Some teens reporting their stories to the Safe Schools Project eventually fled their schools completely: ***Six students (more than one in ten callers) have reported that they changed schools to escape the abuse, in some cases multiple times. Nine teens have reported dropping out altogether as a result of the harassment.***

While the Safe Schools Coalition certainly does not categorically recommend that children drop out of school, it recognizes the sometimes life-saving nature of the act. ***Six youths have reported to the Project that the harassment led to their beginning or increasing substance abuse. Seven have reported that they attempted suicide*** in response to the on-going harassment. ***One mother reported her son's completed suicide***. When dropping out prevents tragedies like this, there may be other ways for a young person to complete his or her education.

Figure 4:

The finding of the Safe Schools Project that substance abuse and suicide attempts are common reactions to harassment is consistent with the findings of the 1995 Seattle Teen Health Risk Survey. About one in three Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual SEA respondents reported heavy or high risk drug use, as did a similar proportion of the *heterosexual* youth who had been the target of anti-gay harassment. About one in five GLB high school students said they had made suicide attempts in the previous year, and one in ten had made an attempt serious enough to require medical attention. Suicide attempts were reported by a similar percentage of heterosexual youth who had experienced anti-gay harassment at school.

Figure 4: Percent of SEA Respondents Who Reported Seriously Self-Destructive Behaviors



On the other hand, a student's changing schools or dropping out, while it may be a life-saving act, is a too-easy solution for administrators. The honorable way to solve a problem is clearly not the removal of the victim. **The Coalition is committed to helping every school in Washington State become a place from which no child will ever need to escape an environment of humiliation and fear. Every child deserves an equal opportunity to an emotionally and physically safe education.**

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We (adults) are *NOT* there for every child.

Some respondents have felt supported by the school staff and administration. Many more have not.

Adults Have Sometimes Contributed To The Hurt

Of the ninety-one incidents reported to the Project in its first four years, 74 have been directed at specific children or teens. (Some of the others were directed at no one in particular, as when a teacher demeans Gay people, not aiming his comments at any one student. Others were directed at an adult, such as a teacher or a guest speaker.) Of the 74 cases in which students were targeted, at least eight (more than one in ten) involved adults offending against the youth or contributing actively to the hurt.

- An acting principal, to a young man who's just had an argument with a peer: ***"Homosexuality is wrong ... [and] if you ever get hurt, I'm not going to help you, because it's your fault."***
- A high school P.E. teacher to a young man who has just been spit on in the locker room: ***"Maybe you should do more pushups. What's the matter; don't you like girls?"***
- A teacher, to a [male] student: ***"I don't need another girl in my class."***

Adults Have Sometimes Stood By In Silence

More than a fourth of the incidents were witnessed by adults; in about half of those cases, adults remained silent. Another fourth of the 74 cases came to the attention of school employees (teachers, administrators) after-the-fact. Altogether, 41 of the incidents were either witnessed by school staff or brought to their attention afterwards. In over half of these 41 cases, the respondent expressed disappointment — if not anger — at the lack of response (or the minimal, dismissive or victim-blaming response) by one or more of the adults in charge.

- A high school student whose principal had just witnessed a verbal harassment incident: ***"The Principal always tries to be supportive of students, but [this time] he didn't speak out one way or the other."***
- A middle school student whose friend was just physically assaulted in a school hallway for being presumed to be Lesbian: ***"There was a teacher in the hall and she was like just standing there."***

Finally, about one out of five incidents in which students were targeted were never *brought* to the attention of the adults at school.[11] Usually this was because the targeted child or teen feared either that they would not be believed, or that nothing would be done, if they were believed, or that the offender would be allowed to retaliate.

- A student who is experiencing ongoing harassment, including threat, on why she hasn't told adults at school about it: ***"The way the school is, they'd just listen and say, 'uh-huh' and wouldn't do anything except tell the girl to cut it out."***
- A young woman who's just endured a beating, on why she doesn't want the principal to know about it: ***"He might bring it up in the letters of recommendation [she needs when she graduates]."***
- A young person who was raped, on why she didn't go to authorities at school: ***"I was afraid of [the perpetrators]."***

[11] *Or at least had not come to any school employee's attention prior to the incident's being reported to the Safe Schools Project.*

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Fortunately, Some Adults *Have* Been There For The Targeted Children And Teens

In defense of the teachers and administrators in Washington State, it is important to note that there has also been "good news" reported. In some incidents reported to the Project, the targeted child or family member expressed satisfaction with the way in which at least some of the adults handled the situation. These respondents simply wanted their story documented. Some also wanted to offer their school's response as a model for other schools to follow.

- The mother of a second grader who had been enduring months of taunts and isolation on the playground: ***"When I called the teacher, [she had already] sent [my son] to the counselor and spent half an hour on slander and name calling [with the rest of the class] and how to support [him]."*** She says she is, ***"sad that this had to happen ... [but] pleased at the school's response."***
- A student who received a written death threat ("Kill Fag"), reported that the Vice Principal ***suspended the offender and told the targeted youth to come to him if there was any more harassment.***
- A district-level administrator reports that, following the assault of two young women in a high school hallway, ***the school staff responded "quickly and efficiently." She says they investigated the incident and reprimanded the offenders.***

The Safe Schools Coalition believes that many incidents happen in the first place because, as with other forms of sexual harassment, students expect verbal and physical Gay-bashing not to be taken very seriously. If adults stand by in silence when the minor slights occur, children interpret our silence as consent, and the degree of violence escalates. We need to begin intervening at the earliest grades and teaching respect for all kinds of differences, if we want to prevent serious violence in the older grades. We *must* be there for every child.

A Caution About Interpreting the Findings of the Safe Schools Project

It is the purpose of the Project to study the phenomenon of anti-gay harassment and violence in schools, not to count how many times it occurs (i.e., not to assess its statistical prevalence). These reports are undoubtedly a small subset of all cases of anti-gay harassment and violence in Washington State schools. They are not intended to be a statistically representative sample. These respondents happened to learn of the Project and were able and willing to report. Therefore, it would be erroneous to assume, for instance, that the proportions of the different types of incidents reported to the Project are any reflection of the relative likelihood that a child will experience one sort of harassment. They simply provide a *portrait of the range* of anti-gay bullying in the schools and of the responses of adults. For a discussion of the findings of studies that have assessed the actual *prevalence* of this kind of bullying in schools, see "The Prevalence of Anti-Gay Harassment and Violence" on page 25.

Another cautionary note. The Project has received reports from a wide range of school districts, but they are not necessarily "the dangerous ones." Although reports have come from at least 30 different districts, it would be entirely erroneous to infer that the remaining ones are harassment-free. In some districts, there may be no adults who recognize anti-gay incidents or perceive a need to hang the poster that refers people to the Project. Some districts may have climates in which employees are apprehensive about displaying the poster. Some may allow posters to be displayed only in counseling or nursing offices, rather than hallways where more students might see them. Some may even prohibit staff from referring individual students to the Project, or, in fact, to any social services outside the school. As a group, these districts ***may***, in fact, be even *less* safe environments for teaching and learning than those from which the Project has received reports.

The Safe Schools Coalition looks forward to the day when there are entire districts that are free of anti-gay bullying and violence. We doubt that any district can honestly make that assertion in 1997. While some districts are making important efforts, much work remains to be done.

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PART TWO

Quantitative Studies of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth and Schools

The Safe Schools Project is qualitative research, designed to help us understand the experiences of sexual minority people and the children of sexual minority parents in schools, not to count their numbers. There have, however, been a handful of carefully designed, population-based, quantitative studies in the last several years which shed light on the question of *how many* students are Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual and on their *disproportionate risks*. Three of these studies are versions of the 1995 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) from the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). All three are comprehensive surveys addressing a variety of issues critical to teen health and safety. Part Two of this Safe Schools Report contains some of the results of these three YRBS studies.

The first of these studies, described in detail in the Third Annual Safe Schools Report, is the ***1995 Seattle Teen Health Risk Survey*** (SEA).[12] It was census-based, not a random sample; that is, it was offered to *every* high school student (grades 9 through 12) in the Seattle Public Schools who was present on the day the survey was conducted. Altogether 8,406 students completed it.

The second study that sheds light on the sexual minority youth in schools is the ***1995 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey*** (MA).[13] The Massachusetts Department of Education surveyed 4,159 students in grades 9 through 12 attending 59 randomly selected schools across the state.

A third relevant study is the ***1995 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey*** (VT), conducted with ***8th*** through 12th grade students.[14] A statewide weighted sample of 7,165 young people completed the Vermont survey.

The Demographics of Sexual Orientation and Sexual Experience

Among the 99 items in the Seattle survey were a few demographic questions. One asked,

> SEA Q58. How would you describe your sexual orientation/preference?
> a. Heterosexual — attracted to the opposite sex
> b. Bisexual — attracted to both sexes
> c. Homosexual (Gay or Lesbian) — attracted to same sex
> d. Not sure

- Overall, about 91% of these Seattle students called themselves Heterosexual.
- The other 9% said either that they did not consider themselves Heterosexual or that they were not sure:
  - 1% identified themselves as Gay or Lesbian.
  - 4% described themselves as Bisexual.
  - 4% were not sure of their orientations.

The 1995 Seattle Teen Health Risk Survey asked only this question regarding sexual orientation identity. It did ***not*** address the genders of people's sexual partners.

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[12] *Peterfreund, N. and A. Cheadle (1996)* Seattle Public Schools 1995 Teen Health Risk Survey, *cited in Reis B. (1996)* Safe School Violence Documentation Project, Third Annual Report. *Also personal communication with Allen Cheadle and additional analyses of the data specifically for the Safe Schools Coalition in April, 1997. For more information about the* Teen Health Risk Survey, *contact Pamela Hillard, of Seattle Public Schools' Comprehensive Health Education Office: 206-298-7987. The report is available at the Safe Schools website: http://members.tripod.com/~claytoly/ssp_home*

[13] *Antonucci, R. (1996)* 1995 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results. *For more information, contract the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education: 617-388-3300 (DOE's Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students can be reached by E-mail: mkozuch@doe.mass.edu). The report is available at the DOE's website: http://infodoe.mass.edu*

[14] *Hale, K. and S. Donahue (April, 1997) "Gay and Lesbian, and Bisexual Students at Risk: Nuggets — News, Notes and Findings from ADAP Research and Planning Unit. For more information, contact Kelly Hale of the Vermont Department of Health, Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs: 802-651-1557 (E-mail: kelly@adap.adp.state.vt.us). The entire* 1995 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, *authored by the Vermont Department of Education and the Vermont Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs, is available at the Office's website: http://www.state.vt.us/adap/pubs.htm*

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Included in the Massachusetts survey were two relevant items, one regarding sexual experience and a second (like Seattle's Teen Health Risk Survey) regarding identity. Specifically, Massachusetts asked,

MA Q.67 The person(s) with whom you have had sexual contact is (are):
- a. I have not had sexual contact with anyone
- b. female(s)
- c. male(s)
- d. female(s) and male(s)

MA Q.68 Which of the following best describes you?
- a. Heterosexual (straight)
- b. Bisexual
- c. Gay or lesbian
- d. Not sure
- e. None of the above

- 2.6% of young women and 2.5% of young men surveyed in Massachusetts said they had had sexual contact with someone of their own gender.
- 23.4% of young women described themselves as Bisexual or Lesbian; 4.1% of young men described themselves as Bisexual or Gay.
- Overall, 4.4% of high school students statewide (and 6.4% of sexually experienced students) reported *either* having had sexual contact with someone of the same gender *and/or* considering themselves Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual.

Vermont youth were *not* asked their sexual orientations. They *were* asked the gender(s) of their sexual partners, if any. It would be erroneous to assume that all those who reported having had sex with someone of their own gender were Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual or that all those who'd had only heterosexual sex were Heterosexual (some may have been forced; others may have been experimenting). And, of course, some of the young people who had abstained altogether are probably Heterosexual while others are undoubtedly sexual minorities. Thus, the usefulness of the Vermont data is limited, in comparison with the Massachusetts and Seattle data. Nonetheless, it is worth sharing. Specifically, Vermont students were asked (among many other health-related items),

VT Q.55 During your life, with how many males have you had sexual intercourse?
- a. I have never had sexual intercourse with a male
- b. 1 male
- c. 2 males
- d. 3 males
- e. 4 males
- f. 5 males
- g. 6 or more males

VT Q.57 During your life, with how many females have you had sexual intercourse?
- a. I have never had sexual intercourse with a female
- b. 1 female
- c. 2 females
- d. 3 females
- e. 4 females
- f. 5 females
- g. 6 or more females

- 4% of 8th through 12th grade young men respondents in Vermont reported having had at least one male sexual partner.
- 3% of 8th through 12th grade young women respondents in Vermont reported having had at least one female sexual partner.

The Prevalence of Anti-Gay Harassment and Violence

Once we understand how many youth are sexual minorities, other questions become crucial: What dangers do they face? How common are incidents of harassment and violence like those reported to the Safe Schools Project? How often are Heterosexual youth targeted in similar ways? Only one survey, Seattle's, specifically inquired about anti-gay harassment and violence. It asked,

> SEA Q23. Has anyone ever made offensive comments or attacked you because of your sexual orientation/preference — at school or on your way to or from school?
> a. Yes
> b. No

- Overall, 8% of all respondents (6% of Heterosexual students and 34% of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual students) said, "Yes," they have been targeted because someone thought they were sexual minorities.
- In other words, about one in three Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual students reported having been harassed or attacked because of it. This is over five times the percentage of Heterosexual students who report being similarly harassed.
- However, because there are so many more Heterosexual students in the first place, a greater actual number of Heterosexual youth (four times as many) reported having experienced this form of harassment or violence.

What about harassment or violence in general, which may or may not have involved anti-gay slurs? All three studies shed light on this. Students who identify as Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual (SEA, MA) and/or who report same-sex sexual experience (MA, VT) are approximately:

- two to four times as likely as their peers to report having been threatened with or injured by someone with a weapon at school in the past year. (SEA, MA, VT)
- twice as likely to report having been in a physical fight in the past year. (MA, VT)
- three times as likely to report being injured in a fight seriously enough to require treatment by a health care professional. (SEA)
- two to three times as likely to report ever having been forced (SEA) or forced/pressured (VT) into having sexual intercourse — not necessarily at school.
- twice as likely to report feeling unsafe or afraid at school, some, most or all of the time. (SEA)

It is clear from all three studies that these young people are disproportionately endangered.

Coming-of-Age and the Frequency of Self-Destructive Behavior

Other studies, besides the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys have shown that the mean age of "coming out" for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual teens is declining (at least in urban areas). One 1993 study found the mean age for boys was 13.1 years; for girls, 15.2.[15] Thus, a significant number are in middle school when they begin to acknowledge to themselves and eventually to others that they are not Heterosexual. Many of these young people have been aware of feeling "different" since early elementary school or before.[16] Often, it is not until puberty, as people's feelings of romantic and sexual attraction emerge or intensify, that they identify the nature of their "difference" as their Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual orientation.

This is not to oversimplify the coming-of-age experience. Unless they have a sexual minority family member or close friend, Heterosexual youth may not consciously name or even notice their sexual orientations, because they are in the majority. And, of course, some Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual people will not figure out toward whom they are attracted until they are older and fall in love. What's more, contrary to popular belief, some people may find that their sexual orientations are fluid over time. That is, the gender of people toward whom they feel attracted or

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[15] *Bailey, N. and T. Phariss (1966) "Breaking Through the Wall of Silence: Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Issues for Middle Level Educators." Middle School Journal 27, 3 38-46 cited in John D. Anderson "Supporting the Invisible Minority." Educational Leadership 54, 7 65-68.*

[16] *Hunter, J. and R. Schaecher (1987) "Stresses on Lesbian and Gay Adolescents in Schools." Social Work in Education 9, 3 180-190.*

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with whom they fall in love may change from time to time, throughout their lives.

At whatever age a person begins to associate a Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual label with him or herself, all the years of overheard, if not personally-directed, slurs may become linked to the young person's core identity. The learned message "Gays are bad people" may metamorphose into "I am a bad person" and self-destructive behavior may ensue.

Similarly, Transgender teens and adults often recall having been confronted since preschool with the hostile inquiry, "What are you anyway? A boy or a girl?!" Again, however, a child's cognitive understanding of his or her feelings may not crystallize until adolescence or even young adulthood. The new understanding combined with remembered hurts often precipitates a crisis.

Some of the youth who were targeted in the incidents reported to Safe Schools identify as neither Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual nor Transgender. They are targeted for other reasons, as described in figure 1 on page 15. They are equally in need of adults' support. They are more or less equally as "at risk" as the sexual minority children in our care.

"At risk" for what? Certainly many sexual minority youth survive adolescence safely and with courage and grace. A significant number, however, do not. The Seattle, Massachusetts, and Vermont surveys all shed light on the self-endangering behaviors of students who describe themselves as Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual (SEA, MA) and/or who report sexual contact with someone of their own gender (MA, VT). These students were:

- approximately two to five times as likely than their peers to report **skipping school** because of feeling unsafe during the past month. (SEA, MA, VT)
- significantly more likely to be using alcohol and other drugs. Specifically, they were about:
- twice as likely to report **bingeing on alcohol** (5+ drinks at one time) at least once in the past month. (SEA, MA, VT)
- twice as likely to report **smoking cigarettes** in the past month. (SEA, VT)
- twice as likely to report **using marijuana** in the past month. (SEA, MA, VT)
- three to ten times as likely to report having ever **tried cocaine**. (SEA, MA, VT)
- two to three times as likely to report having ever **tried inhalants**. (SEA, VT)
- three to four times as likely to have ever **tried hallucinogens, depressants or stimulants**. (SEA)
- three to five times as likely to report having **made themselves vomit or taken laxatives** to control their weight in the past month. (SEA, VT)
- nearly twice as likely to be a **teen parent**. (SEA)
- twice as likely to report having **seriously considered suicide** in the past year. (SEA)
- twice as likely to say they **made a suicide plan** in the past year. (SEA)
- three to four times as likely to report having **attempted suicide** in the past year. (SEA, MA, VT)
- more than four times as likely to say they made a **serious enough suicide attempt** in the past year to have been **treated by a health care professional**. (SEA)

The Seattle study found that Heterosexual students who had been the targets of anti-gay harassment or violence, despite their self-perception as Heterosexual, reported significantly increased risk for most of the same things (e.g., feeling unsafe or afraid at school some, most or all of the time; skipping school out of fear; engaging in heavy or high risk drug use; seriously considering, planning and attempting suicide). **The cost of the anti-gay climate in most schools is very high.**

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Recommendations

For ***strategies to implement these recommendations***, see the *Safe Schools Resource Guide*, available from the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, 206-233-9136 (e-mail: ncamh@aol.com) or the Safe Schools Coalition's website: http://members.tripod.com/~claytoly/ssp_home

Six things a school board and administration can do to *prevent* anti-gay harassment and foster a climate of respect:

- Establish explicitly protective/inclusive policies and collective bargaining agreements.
- Search for, hire and retain a diverse staff.
- Provide staff development.
- Ensure that the library collection includes works which portray diverse individuals and families.
- Support student-led human rights groups and peer anti-bias education projects.
- Ensure that the curriculum teaches about prejudice, dispels stereotypes about sexual minority people and promotes courteous, kind treatment of ***all*** people.

Two things *every* adult in a school can do:

- Model respect and consideration for everyone.
- Require respect and consideration for everyone.

Five things a principal and his or her staff can do to *respond* to anti-gay harassment and provide for every child's safety:

- Intervene in harassment.
- Make certain that students and employees know how to report an incident; make it safe to do so and take reports seriously.
- Educate and discipline the offenders, and monitor and punish retaliation.
- Provide for the safety, support and recovery of the targeted person.

1997 Order Form

Will You Be There for Every Child and Friend?

Quantity

The Fourth Annual Report of the Safe Schools Anti-Violence Documentation Project _____

The Resource Guide For Crisis Support, Education, Training, & Resources About Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues _____

The Poster for Washington State Schools _____

Name: _____

School or Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: ( ) _____ E-mail: _____

Please send this form & donations (if any) to: *Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment*, PO Box 16776, Seattle, WA 98116. ***Donations should be made payable to:*** *Safe Schools Coalition/AFSC*

Organization Membership Form

Washington State groups only, please

School District, Agency or Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

First contact person/representative: _____

Phone: ( ) _____ E-mail: _____

Second contact person/representative:

Phone: ( ) _____ E-mail: _____

Please consider us for organizational membership in the Safe Schools Coalition of Washington. If we become a member we will be listed on Coalition letterhead and publications. It means that, as an organization, we support the mission of the Coalition: ***to make Washington State schools safe places where every family can belong, every educator can teach, and every child can learn, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.***

We understand that the Coalition survives mostly on the in-kind contributions of its members, but that there are no dues at this time. We understand, too, that joining the Coalition in no way precludes our making independent decisions about our own policies and services.

_____ _____

signature of authorized individual date

Please send this form & donations (if any) to: *Safe Schools Coalition, attn: A. Stewart, American Friends Service Committee, 814 NE 40th St, Seattle, WA 98105*

Note: Each Organizational Member should also have two Individual Membership Forms on file (one for each liaison).

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Individual Membership Form

Washington State residents only, please

Name _____

Day Phone: ( ) _____ Evening Phone: ( ) _____

Fax ( ) _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

1) Congressional District _____ Legislative District _____

2) I plan to attend meetings, at least sometimes, in ❑ Seattle ❑ Olympia ❑ Neither, but I want to get mailings

3) I represent a member agency ❑ Yes _____ ❑ No

4) I ❑ work for ❑ am a student in ❑ vote in ❑ have a child in the following school district(s): _____

5) I ❑ work for ❑ belong to ❑ volunteer for or serve on the following agencies and organizations and boards _____

_____

6) Please ❑ do ❑ DO NOT include me in a strictly confidential list for use by Coalition members only

7) I would like to contribute to the Coalition by doing:

- ❑ guest speaking or presenting at conferences
- ❑ testifying at legislative hearings or at the annual press conference or speaking with the media
- ❑ data entry
- ❑ grant writing
- ❑ lobbying/educating individual school board members or administrators
- ❑ lobbying/educating individual legislators via mail or in person
- ❑ writing letters to the editor
- ❑ stuffing mailings
- ❑ providing graphic art and design services
- ❑ spending time with and advocating for an individual youth or family in crisis
- ❑ providing training and technical assistance for teachers, counselors, principals, or nurses (call me)
- ❑ taking minutes at meetings and other secretarial jobs
- ❑ committee work (e.g., research, resource guide, press conference, etc.)
- ❑ other:

Please send this form & donations (if any) to: *Safe Schools Coalition, attn: A. Stewart, American Friends Service Committee, 814 NE 40th St, Seattle, WA 98105.*

Note: Individuals who want to join the Coalition should fill out this form. Organizations that want to join should fill out ***one*** *Organizational Member form and* ***two*** *Individual Membership Forms (one for each liaison).*

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- **To report an incident,** call Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities, between noon and 9 p.m., Monday through Thursday; noon and six on Fridays. In Seattle: 206-323-0220. From anywhere in Washington State, toll-free: 1-800-5B-PROUD.

- **To order additional copies of this Report,** or of the accompanying resource guide or poster, contact the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, PO Box 16776, Seattle WA 98116. Ph: 206-233-9136, E-mail: NCAMH@aol.com, or download them at Website: http://members.tripod.com/~claytoly/ssp_home

- **For more information about the Safe Schools Coalition,** contact Frieda Takamura or Jerry Painter at the Washington Education Association, 33434 - 8th Ave. S, Federal Way, WA 98003. Phone in Washington State: 1-800-622-3393, from elsewhere: 253-941-6700, E-mail: FKTakamura@aol.com or Jerryp2wa@aol.com

- **For more information about the Safe Schools Research Project,** contact Beth Reis at the Seattle-King County Department of Public Health, 2124 Fourth Ave., Seattle, WA 98121. Phone in Washington State: 1-800-325-6165, from elsewhere: 206-296-4755, E-mail: elizabeth.reis@metrokc.gov

- **To join the Safe Schools Coalition,** contact Arlis Stewart at the American Friends Service Committee, 814 NE 40th St, Seattle, WA 98105. Phone: 206-632-0662 ext. 201. E-mail: afscpnr@igc.apc.org

This Report is provided free of charge as a service to schools; donations to the "Safe Schools Coalition" are gratefully accepted: c/o AFSC, 814 NE 40th St, Seattle, WA 98105.

Documenting Anti-Gay Harassment and Violence in School
You can help! Share your story.

The Project is gathering the stories of incidents that happened:

- Anywhere in Washington State
- In an elementary, middle or high school (not a college)
- Since 1990
- On school property (or on the way to or from school or at a school sponsored event like a prom or a football game)
- At least partly because of anti-gay bias (although the person who was harassed or attacked may not actually be Gay)

You can make a report about the incident if:

- It happened to you, or
- You saw it happen, or
- The person it happened to told you about it

  For instance, you may be a friend or a family member or a school employee in whom the targeted person confided.

You can report an incident even if:

- You don't want anyone to actually get punished.

  Maybe you just want teachers and principals to know that this kind of thing happens.

- You don't want to give your name.

  We would keep it private even if you did say your name. We would never contact your school unless you asked us to. Most people just want to tell what happened, but not have anyone call their school.

- You feel the school did a good job of handling it.

  We need to hear stories with happy endings, too. Other schools can learn from your school, if a teacher stood up for you or the principal stood up for your child

- You aren't sure it was such a big deal.

  People sometimes report rapes and beatings, but sometimes they report name-calling or people spreading rumors about someone. We take all of it seriously.

- No single person was actually targeted.

  For example, you might have heard an anti-gay joke on the school bus. No one person was being attacked, but everybody heard it. We want to hear about it.

Call today. The call is free:
1 - 800 - 5B-PROUD

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